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THESE DAYS:**Are Hard-Liners
Being Heard Now?**

By JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

SOMETHING interesting is happening in Washington: The advocates of a hard line in relation to Cuba and the Castroites' attempted Communist subversion of Latin America no longer find their channels of communication to the White House blocked, as they did during the aftermath of the missile crisis.

Meanwhile, in London, U.S. policy planner Walt Whitman Rostow, the old symbol of "disengagement" in the State Department, makes a speech to British businessmen breathing anything but a spirit of disengagement vis-a-vis Castro.

Whether this really represents a "new" Rostow is a point of contention among those who have kept close watch on his career since he left the field of international studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to prepare position papers for the State Department.

Rostow is the author of a book that attempts to give an underpinning in abstract economic theory to British Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home's idea that fat Communists are less menacing than lean ones.

The "new" Rostow, asked to comment on Sir Alec's remarks about fat Communists, said: "The sources of aggression are far more complicated than that simplification. We had a fat Germany that gave us a very hard time."

Such a statement would lead one to believe that Rostow is beginning to wonder about the alleged virtues of "disengagement" anywhere. His friends say he always made a distinction between neutralist postures in faraway theatres such as the Danube valley and Formosa Strait and disengagement in close-up areas such as the Caribbean Sea.

"Rostow," says one of these friends, "may have been for relaxing pressures against communism in Central Europe, where it would be difficult to use our power, but he has supported engagement where it would be easier to employ our strength, such as in Cuba."

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the Rostow London speech is that the so-called "hard liners" inside the government have been unmuzzled. They are being permitted to cohere more or less openly around the figure of Thomas Mann, U. S. coordinator of affairs for Latin America.



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As the top coordinator, Mann, of course, listens to all sides. But his most sympathetic ear is given to State Department employees who, prior to last December, were not letting the world know they differed with the official line toward Latin America.

Their unmuzzling may not lead to any satisfactory disposition of the Cuban menace tomorrow. For the truth is that Castro is getting stronger all the time. The news that filters in from Cuba that mention such details as, "Deliver oxygen to such-and-such a cave," indicates that any slipshod new invasion would result in a disaster that would make the Bay of Pigs look like a lost minor skirmish.

Air cover for any anti-Castro Cuban invasion of the island would have to reckon with ground-to-air missiles and a Soviet-trained Castroite air force. But at the very least the unmuzzling of the hard liners should guarantee that better use will be made of the plentiful information about the Soviet military build-up in Cuba. The information has always been there, but the difficulty has been to get it properly collated for use by CIA and State Department higher-ups.

Now that the hard liners are in a position to use their time constructively, the promise is that things like this will not happen again.

Are all these straws in the wind an indication that there is still hope for the anti-Communist cause? Or are they merely a display designed to keep people quiet until after the election? We shall see. Anyway, it will be interesting to keep tabs on the "new" Walt Rostow's speeches.